



Alserat الصراط

RA'S AL-HUSAYN
Seyyed Hossein Nasr

WHY KERBALA
S.M.R. Shabbar

IMAM HUSSAIN'S HINDU DEVOTEES
Zameer Hasan Kazmi

August 1988

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RA'S AL-HUSAYN

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

O Husayn, beloved of the Beloved of God,
Thy body is interred in the sands of Iraq,
And thy head along the gently flowing Nile.
Two worlds pay thee homage through thy shrines,
Two reflections on earth of a single majestic being:
Thy head was severed on that lamentable day,
That 'ashūrā when the cosmos mourned thy death.
But thy head itself became life's locus anew,
In this land of the Pharaohs and of Islam.
A whole city grew around that noble head severed,
And still revolves around the axis of thy tomb,
Flowing with that *baraka* palpable to the senses.
Men and women praying at thy mosque,
Sufis gathering to celebrate His Names,
Births and deaths punctuated with a visit,
To thy sight, O light of the eye of him
Whom God loved beyond all his creatures here.
While thy body is witness to the pilgrim's cries
And the agony of those afflicted in this earthly journey,
Thy head controls life's rhythm in this vast city,
A head which is also a heart of this Medina of Victory,
The Qāhira where poets and saints have lived and live,
Celebrating in their lives and words that truth

[Extracted from 'al Serat' published by Muhammadi
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SEYYED H. NASR

For which thy noble blood was spilled
And for which thy life was given.
Thy mosque in Cairo rests as witness clear
To the triumph of all that in truth is lived,
For, though error does parade as reality,
It evaporates like the mist of dawn
Before the rising sun of that Verity Supreme
For which thou didst die, O martyr exemplar,
The verity to whose abode thy earthly remains
Guide us through the *baraka* they emanate,
Acting as reminder of the message of thy life,
Which is the final triumph of that Truth
Which alone will utter the ultimate word.

conceived in Cairo, March 1987
written in Washington, D.C., 16 April 1987

HUSAYN B. 'ALĪ, THE SAVIOUR OF ISLAM *

The martyrdom of Imām Husayn and his companions stands as the most tragic milestone in the history of the human struggle for truth, liberty, and justice. The conflict between good and evil, faith and paganism, the cry for justice and against oppression, the demand for liberty and the fight against repression is as ancient as the human species itself, but nowhere in the history of mankind has the struggle of humanity manifested such magnificence and grandeur as was displayed by the resistance of the martyrs of Karbalā'. Moreover, the struggle of Imām Husayn was not waged just for the cause of liberty and justice; its purpose was to save the divine Message of human liberation—Islam—which was itself threatened by the forces of evil in the year 60 AH, when the institution of the caliphate entered its most dangerous phase and emerged as undisguised tyranny and despotism with the ascent of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya to the caliphate. The future of Islam seemed threatened when an overtly licentious tyrant assumed the office of the caliphate with the determination to destroy Islam in its own holy name. It was time for Husayn b. 'Alī, who had patiently endured the repression of the days of Mu'āwiya's rule, to rise for the fateful conflict and with his blood and that of his loyal companions change the course of history.

Most historiographers, addicted to the interpretation of all history in purely material terms, have failed to understand the

* This is the first part of an article which originally appeared in *Al-Tawhīd*, 1/1 (1404 AH), 38-41.

significance of the events of Karbalā' and the meaning of the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn. According to them, the history of mankind has been no more than a chain of conflicts inspired by the political and economic interests of groups and individuals. Though it is true that most of the movements in human history were motivated by political and economic factors, to view mankind and history purely in these terms is a disposition arising from an effort to despiritualize the history of man; it amounts to outright treachery towards mankind and a distortion of the meaning of his sublime struggles which transcend the lust for power and economic gain.

Throughout the history of mankind, tyrants and oppressors have sought to confine human endeavours within the categories which restrict the meaning of human existence to a mere animalistic level. The divine prophets, on the other hand, sought to liberate mankind from this bestial underworld and pointed out the heaven of spiritual existence where man can realize his true human essence awarded to him by the Creator. The prophets and their followers inevitably collided with the tyrants of their times, whose interests were threatened by the teachings of the prophets. It is accordingly the duty of the true *human* historiographer to trace the history of this *human* struggle from ancient times to our own age. This is not a history of the conflict of evil against evil, which may well comprise the bulk of the history of man, but the record of the struggle of the positive humanity of man against the forces of evil.

The Qur'ān itself is the prime example of this kind of historiography in that it traces the history of the *human* struggle from Adam to the time of the Holy Prophet by citing episodes from the lives of all the major prophets. The Qur'ān thus offers a historical perspective in which the mission of the Prophet Muhammad itself is situated. From the point of view of the Qur'ān, it is the history of these struggles which in reality constitutes the truly relevant history of mankind. It is the history of man as a *human* being. Such a view of history also involves political and economic implications, but these are ancillary to the main objective of the edification of the human being and the creation of a truly human society based on divine criteria. Only a historiography that is aligned with the objectives of this Divinely inspired goal of humanity can do true justice to the history of mankind and serve

the educative purpose which is the true aim of history. This means that the historiographer who sees the whole movement of human history in the chronicles of despots and tyrants and the records of the exploits, adventures, and conflicts of animalistic cultures and bestial men is not, in fact, a historian of the human kind; his subject of study is the historical and social existence of the human beast and the animal in man, and not the human being, who is the subject of divine historiography. When such a historian approaches a subject such as the events of Karbalā', he is not at all equipped to understand the significance of this tragedy, which is understandable only in divine and sublime human terms.

It is the perspective of *human* historiography that the great significance of the movement of Imām Ḥusayn comes to light and its true meaning can be appreciated. Imām Ḥusayn confronted a regime that threatened to destroy Islam and the Islamic aspect of Muslim society. When Yazīd succeeded his father, Mu'āwiya, he was hailed as the 'Commander of the Faithful' by all the tribes and provinces, yet his throne was not secure until he could receive the homage of the four most notable personalities of Islam, whom Mu'āwiya, in spite of his utmost efforts, could neither buy nor coerce to recognize his heir-apparent. Without their recognition, Yazīd's authority could not be firmly established. They were Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, and 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Bakr, the sons of the most prominent companions of the Prophet, who were held in great respect by the entire Muslim community. Ḥusayn, being the only surviving grandson of the Prophet, enjoyed greater regard than the other three.

It was this insistence on recognition and this demand for allegiance on the part of Yazīd's government, and the flat refusal of Imām Ḥusayn to give allegiance to Yazīd, that finally led to his martyrdom and that of his seventy-two loyal companions and the captivity of the women and children of his household.

It is an undeniable fact that at no time in history, before or after Karbalā', do we find a group of more than a hundred men, women, and children so strongly united in purpose and determination. There was not the slightest disagreement among them regarding their ultimate goal and the necessity of self-sacrifice. We know that

on several occasions Imām Husayn addressed his enemies and advised them to reconsider their decision to kill him. But never, not even once, did he speak to his companions for the purpose of raising their spirit of loyalty and courage. Neither at Medina, nor at Mecca, nor during his journey towards Kufa, did he ever try to add to the number of his supporters. On the contrary, he repeated his advice to them to leave him and save their lives. Despite this, not a single man left him to join the enemy, while some left the enemy's ranks to join him and chose to be martyred along with him. There were no signs of weakness or regret on the part of his companions throughout this tough trial. On the contrary, they were all happy and in good spirits at the prospect of the precious opportunity to be martyred with their Imām.

Yazīd was defeated in his demand of allegiance from Imām Husayn. The tragedy of the Imām's martyrdom sent a wave of resentment throughout the Muslim lands against the oppressive regime. The tragedy of Karbalā' opened the eyes of the masses and awakened the public mind. The martyrdom of Imām Husayn and the undaunted courage and outspoken criticism of the captives, particularly Zaynab, Husayn's sister, shook the masses out of their submission to oppression and tyranny.

Imām Husayn, his family, and his companions set a sublime example of human resistance against oppression and injustice for Muslim society and all mankind. To the present day, one hears with mixed wonder, sorrow, and admiration of the tales of indomitable courage, generous self-sacrifice and unlimited patience in severe hardships for the attainment of a sacred goal. Imām Husayn not only saved Islam from deviation, distortion, and corruption by the forces of apostasy and oppression, but he revived the institution of martyrdom in a world of cowardly men who were willing to bear even the utmost disgrace and indignity for their fear of death and love of life and the world. His words echoing through the long distance of centuries, are still clear and unequivocal:

Death with dignity is superior to life in dishonour.

His martyrdom gave rise to a series of popular insurrections, which decades later, ultimately ended in the collapse of Umayyad rule. He deprived the caliphate of its dangerous aura of undeserved sanctity

that threatened to obliterate the divine faith by degenerating into a hereditary monarchy.

The message of Karbalā' has preserved its power in spite of the passage of more than a thousand years. The endurance of its message is characteristic of all the things connected with the divine in man and sublime human goals. If the following Qur'ānic messages have motivated future generations and reached and aroused our generation, it is because of the sacrifices of the martyrs of Karbalā', whose blood saved the purity of the Divine message:

*Verily, We sent Our Messengers with clear signs,
and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance
for mankind to stand in justice (57: 25).*

*What is with you that you do not fight in the way of God
and in the way of oppressed men, women, and children, who say:*

*'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city
whose people are unjust and oppressive
and bestow on us from Thee a protector
and bestow on us from Thee a helper' (4: 75).*

Why Kerbala

by S.M.R. Shabbar

[Extracted from *Pyam-E-Aman, Message of Peace*,
Vol. 8 - No. 8, Sept/Oct. 1987 MUH/SAFAR 1408]

This small article is an effort to explain what happened on that 10th Day of the month of Muharram 1,335 years ago, so that even today, a large number of the Muslim community throughout the world spends the first ten days of the first month of the Islamic calendar in mourning. It is simply that Husain, son of Ali and Fatima, grandson of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was killed on that day. He, together with his few companions and relations, was surrounded by the so-called Muslim armies sent there by the so-called caliph Yazid whom Imam Husain resused to give the oath of allegiance. Yazid insisted on this oath of allegiance since he knew that if this grandson of the Prophet of Islam accepted him as caliph of Islam, then he would have no trouble in securing his throne. Husain also knew that if he accepted Yazid, this would endorse all the un-Islamic activities which Yazid was openly exhibiting and it would be a complete betrayal not only of the principles of Islam, but also of the principles of justice and liberty.

Since the creation, countless human beings have come and gone and only a few have left their footprints on the sands of time. Those who have left a message of love and truth, and have guided mankind to attain high ideals are among those whose names live on to eternity. Their names can never be erased from the pages of history nor will they be forgotten by posterity. Among such people are a few saintly men who have, through their exemplary suffering and sacrifice, achieved their highest ideals and objectives. Husain's sacrifice in Kerbala was surely among the most outstanding. He not only sacrificed his home comfort and his life, but also his dearest ones at the altar of the cause which he believed, and which a large part of mankind still believes, to be righteous and just.

Husain gave his life in the path of truth and the crimson stains of his sacred blood will remain forever fresh in the minds of people who care for justice and liberty and human dignity. Although the actual sacrifice was over in one hot afternoon of the 10th day of Muharram 61 Hijri (680 A.D.) yet the few moments of the trial to which Husain was put were the outcome of a life-long preparation. Only one who was raised in the sacred lap of the Holy Prophet himself could have been equal to the task. This noble quality made its contribution to this finest hour of Husain's life. Husain's life was shaped in the mold of the will of God. His learning his spirit of charity, his integrity in conduct and character and indeed his entire life, was a bright image of the Prophet's own life. This saintly life could have had no more glorious end than the one he had at Kerbala.

A quotation from one of the sermons of Husain will not be out of place here, for this will give us an insight into the mind of Husain, while he was on his journey from Hijaz to Iraq. Addressing a gathering of a number of people which included also a thousand strong army of Yazid under the leadership of Hurr, Husain spoke his mind. He said "Oh people, the Prophet has said that he who sees a tyrannical potentate transgressing against God and His Prophet and oppressing and wronging the people and remains apathetic and does nothing, neither by word nor by action, to alter the situation, then it will be just for God to place him where he deservingly belongs."

Much later, in 1961, Abraham Lincoln said in one of his speeches, "to sin in silence when one should protest makes cowards of men." This brings the above sermon of Husain into modern times with such astonishing similarity that even the most dogmatic agnostic cannot deny Husain's message which was for the whole world and not only for Muslims.

For over thirteen hundred years, the unparalleled sacrifice and martyrdom of Husain held a sacred place in the hearts of Muslims and conquered the

minds and sentiments of truth-loving people all over the world.

Professor Brown writes in his history, "Is there a heart which does not melt with grief when it hears about Kerbala? Even non-Muslims cannot deny the purity of spirit with which the battle of Islam was fought".

On hearing about the holy deed, Charles Dickens in his papers on world history wrote: "If Husain fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sisters, wives and small children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore that he sacrificed purely for the sake of Islam".

Sir Frederick James, another well-known English writer says: "The lesson of Husain and every brave martyr is that there are eternal principles of justice, mercy and love which are immutable and unconquerable; and that if evil is resisted, if men are prepared to make sacrifices for them, those principles will always prevail. Throughout the ages, mankind has cherished courage and greatness of mind which for freedom and justice will not yield to the forces of tyranny and evil. Such was the courage and greatness of Husain."

To end this series of quotations, would it not be most appropriate if I quote again from one of the sermons of Husain during his journey to Kerbala?

"You see to what low level the affairs have sunk. Do you not observe that truth is not adhered to and falsehood has no limit? As for me, I look upon death as but a means of attaining martyrdom and I consider life amongst transgressors, oppressors and tyrants as nothing but an agony and affliction.

Husain's fight against tyranny seems to have much deeper significance than a simple narrative can reveal. Firstly, it was a sacrifice for principle. He sacrificed his all, not even sparing the lives of

his own children, so that justice might prevail and the truth of Islam might breathe to live. Secondly, Husain saw clearly that his residence against the infinitely larger and better equipped army was a forlorn hope. He had not gone all the way from Medina via Mecca to wage a war but to make a stand for principle. At the beginning of his journey he had many supporters. Many thought that the Imam was going to fight for the throne and were anxious to share the booty. But the Imam knew what awaited them and from time to time he wanted the faint-hearted to leave. He even relieved them from all obligations of allegiance and pleaded with them to leave him for he knew he was going towards his death. But amazingly, at the same time when he was asking the faint-hearted to leave, he wrote to his true companions to go with him. He wanted to surround himself with a small group of brave and devoted friends who could face death and martyrdom with him.

In so many conflicts of history one may find men who stand firm to a certain limit but then cry out for help or run away when they see death face to face. In Kerbala, Husain did not want to see his companions below the standards Husain set for himself. They were selected for one purpose alone and they did not defy that trust Husain had in them. Right until the last man, his orders were not to seek battle or to attack. If the enemy came forth and called for a fight, his men were to go out and meet the challenge. He did not spoil for a fight but did not hesitate to give battle when called upon although against overwhelming odds. This attitude of mind is positive proof that until the last man, and that person was the Imam himself, it was proven that the Holy Prophet's grandson was not out to wage war of conquest but to defend the religion revealed to the Prophet of Islam.

Thirdly, Husain fought the battle of Kerbala on the basis of the stern laws of **Jihad**, as advocated and practiced by the Prophet of Islam himself. One of the basic principles of **Jihad** was that when one has to fight, it should be without at any time,

permitting personal emotions and prejudices to take possession of one's mind and heart. When all the male members of his family, apart from the ailing son, were killed and all the followers met the same fate, Husain stood alone to give battle and proclaimed, "Even now I shall forgive you if you come to the path of truth and justice." These words carry great meaning for us all because inspite of all the agony and pain Husain suffered, he had expunged all emotions of malice, rancour or revenge from his heart, thus fulfilling the code of **Jihad** to the last word.

Is there any better lesson in history of nobility and self control? Generally speaking, there are two emotions that exist within the human spirit; evil and good. Everlasting conflict rages between the two.

In Arabic **ammara** is the name given to the state of mind in which the soul seeks the fulfillment of its lower desires; and the state of mind in which the soul reproaches rebellious intentions is called **lawwama**. But the soul which has conquered all desires is called '**mutma' innah**' the peaceful and restful one. This is the perfect harmony with the Divine Will; for having triumphed over every kind of passion, desire, sorrow, pain and disappointment, this is the highest stage of spiritual achievement.

In Kerbala, Husain has shown the world that he had achieved this state of **mutma' innah** when he made himself ready for the sacrifice. The Quran describes this in one of the verses which is so appropriate to the story of Husain. **Sura Fajr** (Daybreak) last verse says:

"O thou restful and contented soul, return to thy Lord. Pleased and pleasing Him, enter thou among My servants, Enter thou My Paradise."

(Courtesy-MEHFILE, SHAHE-KHORASAN Research Center, Karachi, Pakistan)

Imam Hussain's Hindu Devotees

by Zameer Hasan Kazmi

*Black-robed, bare-footed, with dim eyes that rain
Wild tears in memory of thy woeful plight,
And hands that in blind, rhythmic anguish smite
Their blood-stained bosoms, to a sad refrain
From the old, haunting legend of thy pain,
Thy votaries mourn thee thro' the tragic night,
With mystic dirge and melancholy rite
Crying to thee - Hussain! Ya Hussain!

Why do thy myriad lovers so lament?
Sweet saint, is not thy matchless martyrhood,
The living banner and brave covenant of the creed
Thy Prophet did proclaim?
Bequeathing for the world's beatitude
Th' enduring loveliness of Allah's name.*

- SAROJINI NAIDU

Extracted from Illustrated Weekly of India,
June 14, 1971.

"In a distant age and clime," wrote Edward Gibbon in **The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire**, "the tragic scene of the death of Hussain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest of readers." The scene, in all its ennobling grandeur and pathos, is remembered every year by Muslims, especially the Shias, during the lunar month of Moharrum. It was on the 10th of Moharrum, 61 of the Hegira era (680 A.D.) when Hussain fell in the Battle of Kerbala.

After the assassination of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet, the caliphate was usurped by the Ommayas. They too were related to the House of Mohammed but their Islam, in the words of Prof. Arnold Toynbee, was only "skin-deep". Their enmity for the family in which Mohammed and his first cousin Ali were born, stemmed from pre-Islamic times. The chief of their clan, Abu Sufian, had been the arch opponent of Mohammed. But after his triumphant return to Mecca the Prophet granted general amnesty to all Meccans. The Ommayas repaid this in a very different manner, especially after Ali was elected Caliph-the spiritual and temporal head-of the Islamic commonwealth.

On January 27, 661 A.D., Ali was martyred while he was praying in a mosque in Kufa, a town in Iraq. His eldest son Hasan was elected Caliph but he had to abdicate and the Ommayas became masters. When the despotic Ommaya Yezid became the Caliph of Islam "the reaction against Islam," writes the French historian Dozy, "was cruel, terrible and revolting."

This same Yezid asked Imam Hussain, the younger son of Ali and Fatema and grandson of the Prophet, to swear allegiance to him. Yezid had shifted his capital to Damascus, Syria. The oppressed citizens of Kufa wrote to Hussain to come to their rescue. The Imam accepted the invitation, and accompanied by his family - small children, sisters,

cousins - and a few followers and friends, he set out from Medina. Meanwhile, another governor had been appointed at Kufa. He bribed the people to break their promise and betray the Imam. When the Imam was twenty-five miles from Kufa he was surprised to find himself and his little caravan suddenly overtaken and surrounded by the Ommaya army. The government forces also blockaded the way to the river Euphrates. In the scorching, waterless desert the Imam and his family and followers suffered extreme thirst and anguish but refused to surrender to Yezid. On the 10th day of Moharrum they fought bravely and fell one by one.

The story of the heroic battle is narrated every year at the gathering of mourners. The narrations are in prose as well as poetry. In Urdu the elegies on Kerbala are called marsias, nauhas, salaam and soz. Many sozkhwan men and women of Lucknow, Jaunpur and other places have been known for their powerful and moving rendering of the elegies in sombre ragas. Such gatherings of the Shias are called majalis. The Imambaras are decorated with alams, (standards) and tazias (models of the martyrs' tombs). On the day of the martyrdom they do not eat till the afternoon. Devout Sunnis also have their gatherings in which the narration of the Tragedy of Kerbala called Shahadatnamas are read. On the tenth day they fast from dawn to dusk. Both Shias and Sunnis break their fast with Khichra. It is made of seven grains in memory of the humble fare given by a partisan to the survivors of the Family of Mohammed.

Since the martyrs including Hussain's infant son, Ali Asghar, died thirsty the devout also put up roadside stalls of cold water and sherbet. There is a saying, Pani Piyo to yad karo peyas Hussain ki: Remember the thirst of Hussain whenever you drink a glass of water.

Hussaini Brahmins

In the pre-Islamic times the port of al-Hera near Basra, Iraq, was the centre of international trade. As India had trade relations with West Asia, Egypt and Rome, many Indians had probably settled at al-Hera. According to the family tradition of some of the Dutt Brahmins of northern India, their ancestors were also among those who lived at al-Hera. It is said that they were the descendants of Ashvatthama, the exiled son of Dronacharya who, after the Battle of Mahabharat, had emigrated to Iraq.

In 686 A.D., six years after the massacre at Kerbala, Mukhtar bin Abi Obaid "the Avenger", a partisan of Hussain, became the master of Kufa. His troops attacked the murderers of Hussain and routed them. According to the legends held by Dutt Brahmins, their ancestors joined the forces of Amir Mukhtar and avenged the martyrdom of Hussain. In the accounts of this battle one Sardar Rahab is also mentioned by some Arab historians. "Sardar Rahab" might have been the Persianised name of the leader of the Indian community settled at al-Hera, and he might have rallied to the cause of Hussain. In the Imam's sacrifice the expatriate Indians could have readily found the echo of Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna at the time of the Battle of Mahabharat: "But if thou wilt not carry out the righteous warfare, then casting away thine own honour thou wilt incur sin; men will recount thee in perpetual dishonour and to the highly esteemed dishonour exceedeth death."

It is said that after avenging the martyrdom of Hussain the Dutts returned, about 700 A.D., to India and settled at Vinannagar, district Sialkot, Punjab. (vide the History of Mohyals by Ratan Chand, Jungnama by Ahmad Punjabi, Bandobast Report of Gujarat, 1865, by Mirza Azim Beg, Shahadat-i-Uzma by Shah Nazir Hashmi Ghazipuri, Insan-i-Kamil by Sarfaraz Ali Khan, Folk Songs of Punjab, etc.)

According to some Muslim historians the "Zuts" of Basra had also fought alongside Ali in the Battle of the Camel. These "Zuts" have been interpreted by Indian historians as Jats. (see Indo-Arab Relations by Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi). The famous historian Tabari (10th century) also mentions a tribe of Indian origin called the Zuts. The word Zut bears greater affinity to "Dutt" than to "Jat" and that the "Zuts" might have been the same Dutt Brahmins whose own legends corroborate the tradition.

It is interesting to note that some of the Dutts are still known as Hussaini Brahmins. Many of them live at Pushkar, Rajasthan and venerate Imam Hussain as an avatar (vide The Vision of India by Sisir Kumar Mitra, Jaico, Bombay, 1949). During Moharrum they recite a ballad in Old Punjabi:

An Old Ballad

"The gallant Siddh Bhog Dutt who assumed the title of sultan made Arabia his new home. There he was called Meer Sidhani. He worshipped Brahma and was a devotee of the Holy Five (Panjatan: Mohammed, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Hussain?)

A descendant of Sant Vaj, he offered his head for the sake of Hussain.

The celebrated Sahad Rai and Hars Rai were his sons. They were exceedingly brave and always took to the battlefield to keep their word and vindicate the honour of their clan. They fought like lions and displayed the prowess of Sri Rama.

Rai Pun was a virtuous man too. The entire family of Dhara Meeru Dutt had made Arabia their home.

The chivalrous Dutts set forth from their settlements, beating war drums and fought ferocious battles. They fought alongside the partisans of

Hussain. They captured and razed the fort of Kufa. They beat their drums and cried that they had avenged the innocent blood of Hussain, shed so mercilessly at Kerbala.

Rahab's seven sons laid down their lives for the love of Hussain.

O descendants and followers of Hussain, do not ever forget the Dutts. . .

Starting from the port of Harya (al-Hera?) with swords and war drums they marched through Syria and captured Ghazni, Balkh and Bukhara. They conquered Qandhar and converged on Sind. They crossed the Attock and settled finally in Punjab from where their forefathers had migrated to Arabia in days of yore."

Some of the Hussaini Brahmins came to live in five adjoining villages in district Gurdaspur. It is said that when they returned from Iraq the governor of the area said to their leader that as much land as he would circumvent from dawn to dusk would be granted to the clan. The leader mounted his Arabian horse and galloped round five villages which were given to the newcomers. Probably because of their Islamic proclivities they were called "Dutt Sultana, na Hindu na Musalmana. . ." neither Hindu nor Muslim.

At present there are some sixty families of Hussaini Brahmins at Allahabad. Many reside in Banaras. Most of them, however, do not observe the Moharrum any more.

In his historical play Kerbala, the great Urdu-Hindi writer Munshi Premchand mentions the role of the Dutts in the war waged by Amir Mukhtar.

-The Dutts belong to the Mohyal caste. King Porus who fought Alexander the Great was also probably a Mohyal. (The eminent Mohyals include

the late General Kulwant Singh, Col. Zorawar Singh Dutt, V.R. Mohan of the Solan Breweries, and also film star Sunil Dutt, the late Geeta Bali, comedian Om Prakash, etc.)

In the Shia Kingdoms of the Deccan and later in the Shia Kingdom of Oudh, with its capital at Lucknow, the rituals of majlis, taziadari, etc., were introduced from Iran.

Gradually these rituals were celebrated as religious-cultural functions and were largely attended by the Hindus. Even today many Hindus of Lucknow as well as of the surrounding countryside take out Tazia processions and recite elegies in Oudhi dialect. Many Hindus believe that miracles are performed, sick healed and boons granted by praying to Ali and Hussain.

The long list of the Hindu devotees of Hussain include Maharani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, many former Maharajas of Gwalior, Indore, Baroda, Jaipur and Banaras, as well as the Sikh Maharaja Sher Singh of the Punjab. The Marathas' devotion to Hussain is mentioned in detail in Letters from Mahratta Camps by Sir Thomas Browton (London, 1813).

Mahatma Gandhi was also inspired by the courage of Hussain. In the words of Munshi Premchand, "Hussain's struggle at Kerbala was history's first and perhaps the last effective voice raised in support of the oppressed and its echo, preserved in space, is still heard."

[From Illustrated Weekly of India March 14, 1971].